

Don't bother saving quarters for metal content

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers questions about coins and currency.

Q—Is there any sense in saving modern-day quarters for their metal content? Might they become valuable, like the older silver quarters did?—P.T., Chicago Heights

A—Your chances of ever making a profit are almost nil. Each clad quarter contains roughly two-tenths of an ounce of base metal worth about a cent at current market prices. The coin's outer layers—made of 75 percent copper and 25 percent nickel—are bonded to a pure copper inner core.

Q—A dealer told us he would pay just \$2 for our authentic \$5 Confederate bill dated Feb. 17, 1864. How can something so old be worth so little?—W.R., Arlington Heights

A—The Confederacy issued at least \$1.5 billion worth of paper money, much of the printing done in 1863 and 1864. Although some bill varieties are major rarities today, many command just modest premiums because of the large quantities that have survived. Remember, too, that condition greatly affects your bill's collectability.

Q—Does the Canadian government sell coin sets to collectors? If so, what's available, what's the cost and how long do I have to place an order?—K.N., Lincoln, Ill.

A—Yes. This year, the Royal Canadian Mint has issued three types of coin sets and a silver dollar commemorating Toronto's 150th year. Prices range from \$5.65 to \$34 in U.S. currency, with a Nov. 30 ordering deadline. For more information and an order form, write to the mint at P.O. Box 454, Station A, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 8V5.

Q—While looking through my coins, I found a 1976 cent with a Liberty bell stamped to the left of Lincoln. What does it signify and where did it come from?—J.S., Lombard

A—Businessmen etch various designs into Lincoln cents in an attempt to create souvenirs. The Liberty bell is popular on cents dated 1976, the Bicentennial year, while John F. Kennedy's portrait and an outline map of the 48 contiguous states are seen often on other Lincolns. Such coins have no special value to collectors.

● Want an expert appraisal of your old coins and currency, free of charge?

Take them to the 20th annual show of the Morton Grove Coin Club from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. next Sunday [April 29] at the American Legion Hall, 6140 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Club members at the "evaluation and identification booth" will tell you how much your keepsakes are worth.

Also, as many as 25 dealers will be on hand to buy and sell old coins. Admission is free.